1: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1954 AE9 Monguor AE9

565 178 558 621 Conversely, the nobles were weakened by the fact that their unearned revenue decreased generation by generation, through inheritance and subdivision, so that more and more, if a noble family were locally wealthy and respected, it was not because of its share of taxes but because this particular family was able to produce and conserve wealth in the same manner as the leading commoner families. The ties of such a family with the rest of the nobility were weakened, and its ties with the local village community and its interests were strengthened.

NOBLES AND COMMONERS

565 178 We may summarize this aspect of the social history of the Monguors by saying that when they first settled in their frontier territory and began the transition from nomadism to agriculture, the social distance between commoners and nobles must have been very great. With settled life and the increasing domination of agriculture, noble families, like commoner families, became increasingly dependent on their own ability to manage their own farms, and local prestige was determined more and more by wealth and ability and not primarily by class. Nobles could, in the conventional form of sale, "pass" their fields to commoners, and commoners to nobles. They bought cattle and grain from each other and sold them to each other. Nobles and commoners, if they had the money, joined together to invest in trade. Apart 565 178 576 from the important discrimination in favor of nobles in immunity from taxes and corvées, and immunity from being flogged in court, the principal surviving distinctions of the aristocracy are such things as their higher rank at important ceremonies, social precedence at dinners, marriages, funerals, and festivities (even though the noble were a poor man), the custom of calling the nobles "ta jen" (great man), and finally the old custom that when a commoner meets a noble on the road, he must dismount, remove his hat, and unroll his pigtail.

In my own experience, I know of a case of an old man named Chao, of Peiyahua, who, refusing to dismount in this manner, was brought before the T'u-ssu, made to apologize, and required to make an offering of a sheep with red paper pasted on its horns and a piece of red cotton cloth bound on its back, and to present incense and oil to the ancestral temple. It is to the disadvantage, not the advantage, of the nobles as a class that many of them show an overbearing pride. Such men are most conspicuous when, though known to be addicted to opium and gambling, they try to uphold their traditional "rights" by demanding deference from commoners.

THE CLAN ASSEMBLY

175 In the year 1913 the Monguors were entering on a period of trouble and decline. The T'u-ssu institution was threatened. Ever since the beginning of the Chinese Republic in 1911 there had been rumors that the Chinese officials would abolish the institution. The dowager who

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of the k'ang. In the presence of the grandfather, the daughters-in-law may not sit, even on the floor.

The Mongours regard it as an insult to the T'u-ssu to open a conversation or keep one's hat on in his presence. It is considered a mark of respect to remove the hat while visiting with a person of position or rank.

The Mongours use the same term in addressing members of the same generation, with a differentiation according to sex. Older persons are addressed as "big," younger ones as "little."

It is disrespectful to present a cracked bowl to a guest. The same bowl is used for serving both food and tea, and it must always be filled to the brim. One never presents the bowl with one hand, although when pouring tea, one may hold the pot in the right hand.

One is not allowed to step over a person who is lying down.

Father and daughter must always keep some distance apart. A married woman may remove her hat when visiting in her own mother's home, but she must always have her head decorated and wear a long gown or skirt in the presence of her parents-in-law or their guests.

i. Celebrations and festivals

Feasting and celebration usually follow the rites of ancestor worship. A large tent is pitched on the open ground below the cemetery, and here the T'u-ssu sits among the nobles, elders and other prominent men of the clan to receive pledges of renewed allegiance from his subjects. As a master of ceremonies shouts directions, the chief and elders of each village, garbed in there ceremonial robes, come up in turn to pay homage to their T'u-ssu. Then a dinner is spread for the T'u-ssu and the prominent members of the clan. Some sit in the tent, some outside on felt rugs at small tables. A whole sheep is presented to the T'u-ssu, then divided among all present. Wine is drunk, and the festive spirit mounts. Girls dance and sing; lamas from the monasteries wrestle; youngsters race on unsaddled horses. It is a great day for all, but it seldom ends without quarreling and fighting. Under the rising influence of liquor, clothes are torn, heads banged and bones broken. According to tradition, no damage suits may be brought for loss or injuries incurred on this day.

Boys are preferred to girls in Mongour society. The festival at the birth of the first son and the selection of his name is particularly important. The Mongours consider the lack of a son as punishment for sins of the parents in some previous incarnation. The sonless woman lives a miserable life, as she has no status in the family or in society. A sonless couple will hire lamas to pray for them, and vow to make long pilgrimages or give alms lavishly if only they are granted a son. Thus the birth of the